Opening the mind to possibilities
IMPACT II
THE TEACHERS' NETWORK

1999
Disseminator
Grants
Ventura County Teacher-Developed
Curriculum Ideas

cosponsored by

Partners in Education
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What is IMPACT II?

IMPACT II is starting its seventh year in Ventura County and is part of a national curriculum-sharing and recognition program for teachers in grades kindergarten—12 in all subject-matter areas and specializations.

More than 30 IMPACT II business/school partnerships exist in cities throughout the United States, including New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, as well as in smaller districts, counties, and even entire states. The program now has several thousand selectively chosen teacher members.

The Ventura County IMPACT II program is a partnership between the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA), the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office, and the Ventura County Star.

Important Events - 2000

February  Teachers send in Grant applications.
March     Disseminator Grants announced.
May       Teacher Business Recognition Program.
August    Display Grants at Summer Conference.
September Distribution of IMPACT II catalog of teachers’ award winning ideas.

Through IMPACT II teachers can apply for $500 Disseminator individual grants for classroom-tested curriculum ideas which they have developed. Collaborative grants for 2 or more teachers are $750. A committee of teachers, school administrators, and business leaders selects the most ready-to-share ideas for grants. Business leaders award the grants at the spring Teacher Recognition Program.

An IMPACT II catalog published each year, distributes these “cutting edge” ideas countywide. Any interested teacher may attend the fall Curriculum Fair to meet the teacher Disseminators and order teacher materials. This fall the award winning lessons will also be accessible on the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools home page on the Internet, www.vcss.k12.ca.us.

Why IMPACT II?

IMPACT II is cost effective. The County Education Office funds the day-to-day operation of IMPACT II, so contributions go directly to teachers and classrooms for student projects.

IMPACT II puts cutting edge classroom projects into the mainstream, turning students on to learning.

IMPACT II enables excellent teaching ideas to reach all teachers in the county, and raises community awareness of exemplary classroom practices.

IMPACT II boosts teacher morale by recognizing innovative teaching as well as enhancing teacher professionalism through local/national training and teacher presentations.
Message from the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

The purpose of IMPACT II is to spread excellent teaching ideas throughout our county. Recognizing innovative teachers at the awards dinner is an opportunity to celebrate the true heroes and heroines in our communities. In its seventh year of existence in Ventura County, IMPACT II has matured into the program that we envisioned at its inception. Business leaders, teachers, and administrators are becoming aware of the program and participated in unprecedented numbers in 1998-99. Since 1993, over 400 applications have been received from teachers, and 189 were selected and awarded a portion of the $98,800 in donations from local businesses.

In 1999, 30 projects were selected for awards. Thirty-six teachers were recognized for their innovative teaching ideas at our IMPACT II Awards Reception and Dinner held in May. Teachers were awarded $18,250 that night. Ginger Brandenburg of Moorpark High School was awarded the Ed Lyon Excellence in Education Award for the "most useful and replicable" project for her submission entitled "Ladies and Gentlemen... What are your Great Expectations?" Her name has been added to the perpetual trophy that hangs in the lobby of the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Administrative Services Center in Camarillo. Her name joins the 1996 Ed Lyon Award recipient, Jane Sweetland, the 1997 recipient, Bonnie Wascher, and 1998 winners Marta and Mark Wilson. Additionally, Ginger received a $500 scholarship for her own professional development funded by Jim Motush of Pac Fab.

This year marked the second presentation of the Annual Superintendent's Award. This award was established to stimulate the submission of IMPACT II projects in a specific discipline and carries with it an additional $500 award. In 1999, visual and performing arts projects were sought. Tara Hewitt, Wildwood Elementary School teacher in the Conejo Valley Unified School District, was selected as the recipient of this award for her project entitled "Hooray for Hollywood." Pacific Bell's representative Mike Salacci provided the supplemental funding for this award.

The discipline selected for the 2000 Superintendent's Award is Mathematics. IMPACT II projects that develop mathematically powerful students or encourage participation in school-to-career experiences that develop and support mathematical knowledge will be considered. We hope to receive several outstanding applications for this coveted award.

IMPACT II is one example of the outstanding business-education partnerships that exist in Ventura County as a direct result of our multi-year relationship with the Ventura County Economic Development Association (VCEDA) and their participating businesses. The Ventura County Star newspapers' title sponsorship continues to enhance the media coverage and underwrites the dinner expenses for award recipients. Our business partners in IMPACT II grew from six companies in 1993 to 31 companies donating $22,800 in 1999. This year, Exxon made a very generous donation that funded the cost of placing all past year's projects on the worldwide web for enhanced access by teachers. The close connection between business and education, such as that facilitated by IMPACT II, will provide long-term mutual benefit.

I want to express my appreciation to the business leaders, school administrators, and teachers who have helped IMPACT II grow. The 1999 steering committee leadership by Rudy Gonzales and Nancy Williams of Southern California Edison and the administrative support by Kerry Roscoe were invaluable to the success of the program.

I encourage all teachers in Ventura County to borrow from the great ideas in IMPACT II recognized projects and to submit your successful innovative instructional ideas next year. IMPACT II is one way that we encourage teachers throughout Ventura County to demonstrate their "Commitment to Quality Education for All."

Sincerely,
Charles Weis, Ph.D.
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
September 1999
Welcome business partners, teachers, administrators and family to the seventh annual Impact II Awards dinner.

Over 125 people attended the 1999 Impact II awards dinner.

Nancy Williams and Rudy Gonzales kept the program moving.
AWARDS DINNER

The Ventura County Star generously hosted all the teachers at the awards dinner.

A few samples of the Impact II projects on display.
Each year the County Superintendent will designate one academic discipline in which the competition for the Superintendent’s Award will be conducted. The area chosen will generally reflect an area of study which is in need of new teaching ideas. Eligible teachers will be notified of the chosen discipline in the fall of the school year. Projects that are submitted in the designated discipline will be automatically entered in the competition. The author(s) of the winning project will receive an additional $500.00 honorarium, a wall plaque for their school, and the name(s) of the honoree(s) will be added to the perpetual wall plaque in the Administrative Services Center of the County Superintendent of Schools Office.

For more information on the Impact II Grants Program please contact:
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Ed Lyon

Excellence in Education Award

Presented to the Grant recipient who best reflects the criteria of innovativeness, creativity and adaptability

"My proudest work has been in the educational community, trying to bring about a partnership between business and education."

In 1996 the Impact II Steering Committee established the Ed Lyon Excellence in Education Award in honor of Ed’s decades long commitment to youth and quality education in Ventura County. His involvement in education at all levels and his tireless efforts over the years have set a laudable example for other community business people to follow.

With 30 years experience in the oil business, he was founder and Chairman of the Board of Gaviota Maintenance Service and has served on the boards of numerous petroleum industry associations. Despite his extensive professional involvements, Ed has made a personal commitment to volunteer work for the community. His activities include work as a Fair Junior Livestock Program supporter, a member of the Ventura Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors, a past United Way co-chairman, and president of the St. Bonaventure High School Parent Teacher Guild. A past president of VCEDA and board member for over 21 years, he expanded the VCEDA Education Committee with programs like Ventura County Science Fair, Ventura County Business Week, Teacher-Business Intern Program, classroom-to-business bus tours, School-to-Career Conference, and Tech Prep advisory participation. In 1993 Ed was instrumental in bringing the Impact II program to educators in Ventura County. Additionally, he has spearheaded the drive for a four year California State University campus in the County. Now he is director of the Ventura County School-to-Career Network (a partnership of students, educators, parents and business using a new approach to teaching and learning that links education to career interests).

So it is with great pride that we dedicate this award to Ed Lyon, a true advocate of Excellence in Education.
1999 Impact II Partners

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IMPACT II

1999 Grant Recipients
**Alea Iacta Est: The Die is Cast**

**Power, Responsibility, and Reason in Greece & Rome**

**The Idea and Its Value**

To help students see the connection between individual responsibility and democratic ideals, we designed a team-taught, interdisciplinary unit which gives students a strong historical foundation while looking at issues of power and loyalty through the lens of literature. Using the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (SPA) as a jumping off point, students look at individuals' ideals in the evolution of democratic republics and the relationship between politics and personal gain in *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare.

Our goals in this month-long unit include: targeting multiple intelligences, encouraging informed answers to the question “How do ideas become reality?”, and having fun while learning about the rise of democracy and republics. We utilize small- and whole-group discussions, reading aloud, interactive group work, writing in pairs, lecture, simulations, drawing, and acting out scenes from literature and history in this unit. Students read and analyze *Julius Caesar*, evaluate Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” compare the military campaigns of Pompey and Caesar, dress in togas to re-enact scenes, estimate the number of troops needed for military campaigns, compare the philosophies of SPA, simulate life as a Roman Senator, citizen or slave, taste Roman olives and bread, design and draw new coins, sing in Latin, rewrite scenes into “1990’s English,” and recreate a battle scene between Caesar and Pompey. Students also watch an A & E Biography on *Julius Caesar*, and the film of *Julius Caesar*.

We were inspired by the Frameworks and by our own desire to fuse English-Language Arts and History-Social Science in our two-hour, team-taught class. We saw a natural connection between issues of power in *Julius Caesar* and the struggle to establish democratic ideals. Throughout the unit, we try to emphasize how an individual’s sense of honor and loyalty can either support or destroy democratic ideals. Our end of the unit assessment includes an expository essay and final test.

Based on end-of-the-semester surveys, students responded positively to this unit as a “fun” and “educational” unit.

**State Frameworks**

The 1997 History-Social Science Framework recommends focusing on “the rise of democratic ideals” and “the significance of Greek philosophers’ beliefs...in relation to democratic ideals” for tenth grade. It suggests reading selections from Plato’s *Republic*, which we include by reading and re-enacting Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” which requires evaluation and interpretation. The English-Language Arts Framework recommends a rigorous program of reading and expository writing for tenth-grade students.

**Students**

We had 138 tenth-grade, college-preparatory and Resource students who participated in the unit. The unit could easily be adapted for non-college preparatory students, for example, instead of giving students the original text of the “Allegory of the Cave,” give them a summary designed for their reading level. A research project on Ancient Greece or Rome could be added to this unit. The unit works well with students of varying abilities since it is interactive in nature, with a plethora of activities.

**Facilities/Materials**

We have adjoining rooms, with a collapsible wall which is opened most of the time; however, many of the activities could be adapted for one classroom. Supplies include: an overhead projector, paper and art supplies for shields and standards, costumes (white sheets for togas, paper laurel wreaths, etc.), copies of *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, the A&E Biography video of *Julius Caesar*, and the film version of *Julius Caesar* with James Mason as Brutus, and a variety of texts on Greek and Roman Social and political culture.

**Outside Resources**

We left the classroom for a nearby lawn to re-enact the battle scene between Caesar and Pompey. We borrowed athletic paraphernalia from the PE department to designate the contubernia, or Roman foot soldiers, in our battle. Teachers could easily coordinate with the Drama department as well.

Grade 10

English Language Arts, Social Science, Visual & Performing Arts

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Business Partner
Ventura Chamber of Commerce
A Novel Approach:
An ELD/Honors English Interclass Activity

Grade 9-12
English Language Development/English

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Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Idea and Its Value

Students whose paths seldom cross were brought together in this unique activity that involved a cross-cultural connection and a sharing of ideas and helpful hints to improve written expression. It all started when the English Language Development (ELD) teacher said that her students' ability to express their thoughts was being frustrated by their inability to successfully self or peer edit. The Honors English teacher volunteered to use her students to peer edit the ELD papers.

This particular novel unit was devised in order to meet the needs of a multi-level secondary ELD class focusing on the four areas of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The first ten weeks of the semester were devoted to making the chosen novel (in this case, *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep) accessible to the students through "pre-reading activities": vocabulary study, setting description, and explanations of unfamiliar concepts; "into activities": paired readings, directed reading activities, discussions, creating illustrations of actions or concepts from the novel, comprehension tests, and a "beyond activity": writing a new concluding chapter as an alternative assessment. The students worked either in groups or independently on this final activity. They wrote, peer edited, revised and typed final drafts using classroom computers.

The final drafts were sent to the Honors English class for editing, while the ELD class embarked on a comprehensive research unit where the use of the library and various types of research materials, including the computer, were taught by the teacher and the librarian. After guided lessons in understanding and using the materials, the students were asked to create a museum and a magazine, inspired by the Impact grant project of Mary Schultz, about a chosen topic from the novel studied. Students used the library and the computers to do the necessary research and to create materials for both the museum and the magazine.

Collaborative groups were formed in the Honors class and were assigned one chapter each (à la "Novel in an Hour" activity from Literature and Cooperative Learning by N. Whistler and J. Williams, 1992). Each group read its chapter, listed the characters, told something about each character, and prepared a summary to share with the rest of the class. Then each group created quality illustrations of at least five things per chapter events, visual imagery, or symbols which ELD students later identified and sequenced.

Using color-coded copies of ELD story extensions, the Honors students corrected errors, suggested re-wording for clarity, and added details to add. Each student editor also wrote 2-3 compliments about each story extension and 1-2 suggestions about how to improve the writing style of the story. At first the Honors students were not aware of the linguistic challenge for the student authors, but when they found out that the stories were written by second language learners, they were eager to give helpful suggestions. The Honors portion of the project was accomplished in a little over a week. Points were given to groups for the listening and visual activities, and individual scores were given for editing.

The story extensions and suggestions for revision were returned to ELD students who interally read and shared comments. Stories were then filed in their portfolios for later revision.

State Frameworks

This activity supports the State framework goals of developing ethical, aesthetic and cultural values; reading and responding to works in depth, improving oral and aural language abilities; learning the writing process, developing voice and style, and the development of critical thinking skills.

Students

37 10th Grade Honors English students and 90 English Language Development students participated in this unit.

Facilities/Materials

Class set of a novel (we used *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep) Computers for word processing and research, Classroom art supplies
Big Business Logo: A Unit of Ratio, Proportion and Measurement

The Idea and Its Value

Big Business Logo is a relevant, motivating middle grades scaling and measurement unit that encourages buy-in from students and directs application of fraction operations, proportion and measurement tools and skills. Students of diverse ability levels can access this scaling activity, depending on the complexity of their chosen logo.

The inspiration for Big Business Logo came during a visit with my brother at Pacific Neon sign shop in Sacramento. I realized my students were "expert" consumers and very familiar with the business logos on their favorite products. The sign industry is now computerized, but in the past, sign makers had to depend on mathematical ratios to enlarge and shrink the product logos. A logo goes through many transformations, as it is used for letterheads on corporate stationary or a ten foot high neon sign.

Big Business Logo was a culminating activity during second quarter's focus on rational numbers. My eighth grade students were thrilled to bring in their favorite product logos and discuss the importance of logos for instant product recognition.

The unit begins with a review of standard measurement and how to use an "inch" ruler. We first construct a "jumbo inch" (scale 1 to 12) and mark all the fractional representations by folding and labeling 1/2, 1/4, 1/8's, 1/3's, and 1/16's. This graphic organizer provides a powerful reference throughout the unit when students need to visualize "half of a half" or find equivalent fractions. Traditionally, such topics as fraction operations, measurement and proportional drawing are not posed in a practical context. Students have trouble developing a fundamental understanding of part to whole relationships and connecting their math skills to the world of work.

This unit lasts about two weeks, but can be part of a larger study of rational numbers. Students begin by selecting a business logo from a magazine, newspaper or product package. Before they attempt to enlarge their own logo, they try "UPS" logo or "Big X" (the Xerox logo). The whole class enlarges the UPS logo. We measure the components, choose a scale factor and chart the original and enlarged measurements. The activity is self-checking, as students compare their drawing and calculations with each other. Once they have a model for a successful enlargement, they begin work on their own logo. They estimate an appropriate scale factor, so that their logo will fit on an 8 1/2 x 11" paper. Their conversions are organized in a chart showing original measurements, the scale factor and the enlarged measurements. Students are actively engaged in fraction operations without whining and boredom. They persevere in measuring and coloring until it is hard to tell the enlargement from the original. The only difference is size. Students who need to build measurement skills can choose logos with straight line designs. Those who want to extend their geometric and measurement skills can select logos with curves.

In their conclusion, students reflect on the variety of math skills they used. They realize they were not just drawing pictures. They were adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions, finding equivalent fractions, understanding the fractional representations on a standard ruler and using protractors, compases and rulers.

The enlarged logo with its accompanying data chart is the assessment. Students present their logos alongside the original. A technology component employing spreadsheets or the use of CAD-CAM programs could easily extend this unit. It is crucial, however, that students first calculate and draw their own enlargements, so that they appreciate the power of technological assistance.

State Frameworks

The California Mathematics Framework states: "Middle school mathematics should emphasize the practical power of mathematics." Big Business Logo helps students understand fractions, and develop accuracy with measurement tools. It encourages individual initiative and perseverance, while engaging students in analytical thinking. Finally, this unit offers students a window into the world of business and how mathematical skills might translate to an exciting career field.

Students

150 eighth graders participated in this unit.

Facilities/Materials

Basic classroom supplies and magazines as a source for logos.

Grades 6-8
Mathematics

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Columbus Went A-Courtin’

The Idea and Its Value

Dreamer, navigator, explorer and entrepreneur Christopher Columbus was all these. I wanted my students to grasp these aspects of Columbus to understand the larger context of his achievements, and to extend their perspectives beyond the standardized Eurocentric telling of this amazing epoch. For example, what scientific and social obstacles did Columbus surmount? What role did a woman, Queen Isabella of Spain, play in this drama? What legacies did Spain leave in the Western Hemisphere? What consequences were suffered by the “discovered” cultures? Have social values and mores changed in five hundred years? How so?

My approach to this month-long unit was inspired by Jane Yolen’s book Encounter (Spanish title, Encuentro). Its narrator is an indigenous child, thus, the story is a departure from the standard point of view on the Spanish arrival in the “New World.” After all, it was an ancient world for the boy and his people. Yolen’s book is extremely rich in metaphor, and open to interpretation. This provokes students to define many words and situations, and challenges them to defend their ideas by crafting careful, cogent arguments.

To encourage the empathy needed to understand history, I ask students to “become” Columbus, Isabella, a sailor or a member of the people of the western lands. They create antique scrolls for petitions to European monarchs. They reenact scenes at medieval courts, while playing records of Renaissance music. They create the props and wear Columbus’ robes, the bishop’s headpiece or Isabella’s crown.

As a teacher read-aloud, I share the book Pedro’s Journal (El Diario de Pedro). Students dramatize scenes between the young boy, Pedro, who is hired to work aboard the Santa Maria, and Columbus. Like Pedro and Columbus, students also keep a journal (actually a reader response log). They bind their pages together with leather. We discuss the relationship between writing, knowledge and history.

A key connection this unit makes is between our western United States and Europe. Tracing the links between California, Mexico, the Caribbean and Spain, students begin to see that the Pilgrim settlers represent only a fraction of our country’s initial European colonists. Students establish links that for most are eye-openers. “You mean I speak Spanish because of Columbus?” one 8th grader asked. A third grader studying base words and derivations asked, “Does the word colonist come from Columbus?” (In Spanish, the name “Columbus” was “Colon”.)

Other social studies skills this unit covers include map usage and physical and cultural geography terms. Because I teach bilingual students, I need to use Latin cognates, such as latitudinal culture/culture, etc., in an natural and meaningful way. This extends and reinforces students’ language and self-esteem, and lays a strong foundation for ESL.

We explore astronomy and meteorology, because the stars guided early sailors and the wind and weather affected them tremendously. Pedro’s difficulty with weather causes us to study water, force and surface tension. By studying boats and their structures, students learn about area and perimeter, geometry and division. Columbus used square sails as well as triangular ones, and students work out why. They draw the outline of the Santa Maria in chalk outdoors, creating a tangible perimeter, then divide the deck area into 1’ x 3’ bunks to see how many men could squeeze on board. Students are amazed as they realize what a tiny boat it was. For many kids this is the dawning of their perception of the bravery and audacity of Columbus and his sailors.

State Frameworks

This unit is highly adaptable across the curriculum. The drama and art of the plays and hands-on activities excite students’ imaginations. The science work motivates many students, including the girls. Furthermore, the chance to explore their own roots historically is something few of my Latino students have ever had the chance to do in school. I believe it is important that they gain an appreciation of their incredible heritage, fixed in Europe as well as in the Americas. All students begin to understand that “American” land was once “Spanish,” but before that there were still other cultures of long standing whose people, ideas and artifacts still exert a notable influence on the land’s subsequent inhabitants.

Students

I have taught this through sixth grade classes. It lends itself naturally to English SDAIE or Spanish instruction, and fits virtually every learner’s needs.

Facilities/Materials

Construction paper and cardstock, or velvet, and specialty paper. Videos and books on weather, oceans, architecture, Spain and Columbus augment lessons.

Outside Resources

Trips to the seaside allow us to sail boat models, and create poetry about water.
Come to the Fair (State Fair That Is!)

The Idea and Its Value

"Come to the Fair, (State Fair That Is!)" is the culminating event of the fifth grade yearlong study of the United States. At the Fair, students display their huge banners on state facts while showing related projects and serving food from their states.

During the first month of the school year, each student chooses a state to study in depth and sets a collection folder to be used throughout the year to deposit any reports, news articles, tourist information, etc., they find.

Based on state, students are also placed in one of the following state groups: Northeast Region, Southeast Region, Midwest Region, Southwest Region, Rocky Mountain Region, or Pacific Region. Each group makes a large outline map. Beginning in October, one day is spent each month on a regional group. At this time the teacher presents a variety of activities. We learn songs from the area, work with a variety of maps, history, weather, and climate, and make graphs and charts, draw to scale, compute distances, and compare and contrast states. We investigate folklore and legends, write letters, and have speakers from various states.

As we study our major social studies and science units, state information is integrated. When we study Native Americans, we investigate early Indians in our state. When we study Rocks and Minerals, students make a state map noting the rocks and minerals in their state and search the Internet for mining sites. When we study Energy, students compile a packet of maps and information of the energy resources available in their state. As we progress through American History, students are encouraged to record historical happenings in their state. During News Team, students are given extra credit when reporting news from their state. (News from each state can be found daily in USA Today or on the Internet.) Games, videos, and CD-ROM are also used. Students learn cross-stitch embroidery and stitch flags and emblems to wear on Fair Day. By May we have studied all areas of the United States.

In May students complete their research which includes state flower, flag, population, major cities and landmarks, geography and climate, history, natural resources, manufacturing, political leaders, agriculture, famous leaders, arts and crafts, foods, etc.

Once the information folder is complete, each student is given a fifteen foot long piece of butcher paper. This will become a banner and is the place to record all information about their state in a colorful and picturesque way. These banners are easy to transport home and parents rave about the enthusiasm the students have when working on them at home. Students also

The Fair: The highlight of our year is the Fair, where students display their huge state banners in a large gym. Each state is represented by students from that state working together to display their state in an appealing manner. The Fair is a very popular event for the school because it provides an opportunity for all students to see their state as well as other states. The Fair also provides opportunities for students to improve their public speaking skills.

State Frameworks
This unit supports all areas of the State Framework and engages student activity in the learning experience.

Students
Students from all academic levels can participate. Two or three students may work together on one state. To accommodate learning styles, students have many choices of projects.

Facilities/Materials
An extensive bibliography is available for research books, activity books, Internet sites, cross-stitch patterns, videos, CD-ROM, and games.

Outside Resources
In the spring, invite parents, grandparents, friends, and teachers, to come in and talk about their native state.

Grade 5
Social Studies, Science, Math, Language Arts, Music, Art

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Explorer Dudes:
Life-sized Replica of California Explorers

Grades 4 - 8
History/Social Studies

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Business Partner
Exxon

The Idea and Its Value
This unit gives fourth grade students an opportunity to "meet" several of California's great explorers. Students use research, report writing, computer and CD ROMs, art, and oral presentation skills to create and share their California explorer.

Why a replica? It seemed after reading and discussing information, students still thought that there was only one real explorer, Columbus. What could be done to teach the students that there were a number of different explorers? The students needed to "meet" these people and discover for themselves who sailed the oceans' currents. How could the students "meet" them? The life-sized replica allows the students to fully understand that these were real, unique individuals whose lives impacted the history of California. They were able to discover through their research that each explorer had his own name and personal history. That he wore clothes relative to his time, and that his life was unique from other explorers.

Students begin by choosing one of California's great explorers. They're given one week to gather research materials using books and encyclopedias as well as material found on Encarta and the Internet. Students are given a series of suggested questions to be addressed in their report. If information is scarce on any of the research areas, students are instructed to substitute other information more readily available.

Students bring research materials to school and are given 3 to 4 class periods to cooperatively research in groups. Students share and exchange data, write collaboratively, and edit and revise reports. Students also create a map, which includes a key, illustrating their explorer's routes of travel.

Students are then encouraged to take advantage of still more open-ended learning. Students may add additional information to their study. Students may create an audio tape of the explorer giving commands to his crew, or thoughts he may have had. Students may write a mock journal of their explorer or show various ocean currents used by sailors.

After replicas are completed, students gather in small groups to make oral presentations. They share highlights about what they have learned and tell about their favorite pirate of creating their replica. The room is abuzz with the excitement of this culminating event. One student shared, "I learned that there are more explorers than just Columbus." Students then answer a series of self-reflection questions.

Explorer Dudes make learning about history come "alive" as students "meet" these men of the past. It is an exciting way to learn. Working together in collaborative research groups affords all students the opportunity to synthesize materials, and receive the support they need. The open-ended nature of the research allows students to expand their learning and encourages investigation. One student reflected, "I think this assignment is a good way to learn because it makes you wonder how the Indians felt about letting explorers take over their land. The building of the replicas allows for a broad range of spatial problem solving and creativity and is often the students' favorite aspect of their project. One student wrote, "This project is very fun because it has many hard responsibilities, but at the same it's fun. It gives a lot of knowledge about the past and it is very worthwhile. I really enjoyed it!"

State Frameworks
Explorer Dudes supports the California Framework emphasizing learning across the curriculum. This project not only teaches social studies curriculum, it also incorporates aspects of technology, language arts, and time management.

Students
For several years, heterogeneous groups of fourth grade students have successfully completed the project which could be adapted to grades four through eight. Students could create replicas of Revolutionary or Civil War heroes, or a person from an ancient civilization.

Materials
Butcher paper, art supplies such as paper, paints, glue, crayons.
Intolerance Today Slide Show

The Idea and Its Value

The purpose of this project is to examine intolerance in the world today. It was originally designed as a follow-up to the Museum of Tolerance; however, it has been used alone or as a follow-up to the study of the Civil War. It allows the students to apply what they have learned to their world today. At the same time it teaches the following research skills with books, magazines and contemporary materials such as CD’s and the Internet in decision making, problem solving, and paragraph writing and rewriting.

Students can choose from a specific list of topics, ranging from the Klu Klux Klan to Sunheades to the NAACP. The variety allows for individual interest, maturity and intellectual sophistication. They must include the following in their research: definition of the organization/event, historical background, milestone/major events, important people, and the status today. As each topic is slightly different, other areas can be included.

After the research is done, the student must select the 6 to 8 areas they think are most important (including the aforementioned). For each topic they must select a symbol or a picture that can be photographed successfully. Then they are ready to do their storyboard. (This is a movie production word that makes them think they are in the movies and not writing paragraphs).

The storyboard is a polished rough draft. It is 6-8 pages depending on the student and the topic. Each page shows the picture to be used and the paragraph. The topic sentences and the transitions between pages are underlined. This allows the teacher to check for content and writing before the pictures are taken. More research (solid facts) may be required at this stage in addition to rewriting.

Finally, the student must choose a contemporary song that has the same theme as their topic.

When the rewriting is complete, the slides can be taken. While they are being developed, the students record their polished narratives (paragraphs) with their music. The music must enhance the presentation, not distract from it. This can be a difficult problem to solve.

Finally, the slides are arranged, in order, by subject, in the carousel. They are shown with the appropriate tapes. Students love to experience each other’s presentations, especially the music. The music helps them remember what the topic was all about and makes it “seem” more contemporary. This is also a “slick” presentation because there is no waiting for students to get ready. They feel very professional.

Obviously, this can be used with any topic at any level. It is just a trick to get students to write effective paragraphs with good topic sentences, lots of appropriate facts and effective transitions. Actually, the presentation becomes an essay on the topic. It's a fun way to learn to write an essay.

State Frameworks

This unit follows the frameworks for Social Studies and English and can also be used as enrichment.

Students

Several hundred students have participated in this project over the years including GATE, Resource and regular students.

Facilities/Materials

Camera, slide film and projector, and tape recorder are used.
Hooray for Hollywood

Grades 4-12

History/Social Science, Language Arts, Mathematics, Performing Arts, Cultural Literacy

More Information

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The Idea and Its Value

Lights, Camera, Action! Hooray for Hollywood is an interdisciplinary, hands-on study of Southern California’s most profitable sector, the motion picture industry, in which students write, create and perform an Academy Awards program highlighting the golden era of Hollywood, the 1930’s and 40’s. This unit can be taught over a period of 46 weeks to a semester, depending on the time available.

Students enjoyed this comprehensive unit because it brought history to life. By recreating history, rather than simply studying the textbook, students assumed an active role in their learning. With the film industry employing many students’ families and friends, and appearing on our local and national news, I used the children’s vested interest in the movies as my springboard for studying California in the 1930’s and 40’s.

Through the Internet, multimedia clips, library resources, interactive media, and interviews with grandparents and elders, students began researching and learning about Hollywood’s golden era. We discussed the effect politics, morals, economics, and even fashion had on the movie making industry during that time.

Our new-found knowledge was applied in the creation of our own Academy Awards celebration. I presented the class with a set of pre-screened, age-appropriate Oscar nominated films from the time period. After discussing and analyzing why the films were reflections of our state and national history as well as how feasible recreating and performing the scenes from the movies would be, the class chose their favorite film scenes for our performance. Decision-making skills were exercised during the casting process, as the children were encouraged to challenge themselves in what roles they would play.

After choosing and casting our nominated films, some of which included The Wizard of Oz, It’s a Wonderful Life, and The Three Musketeers, the children adapted the scenes for our show. The cost of each movie assembled, edited, and revised the dialogue of the films to create their three to five minute scenes. Dramatic structure, theme, and character study were explored during the small group writing sessions.

Once the scripts were complete, students learned the process of production from designing and making the sets and costumes, to the rehearsal of the music, dance, and dramatic scenes of the show. Mathematics played an important role in the construction of the sets and costumes. Measuring and calculating size conversions for the building of the sets and the sewing of costumes, as well as scaling and replicating objects from our designs to their actual size, were discussed and applied during the unit. Students also learned budgeting during this time, and the class faced the real life dilemma of how to get the most bang for our limited buck.

During the rehearsal process, students not only sharpened their artistic skills, but also enhanced their social development. The class learned and sang three songs from the nominated films, and also added stage movement and dance to the performance. We discussed the origins of the songs and the style of the music during the time period. For the scenes, the performers studied the craft of acting, mastering the terms, lines, movement and character study. The rehearsals promoted social growth and interaction between the class members on many different levels. Students discovered that collaboration and teamwork were the only option for a successful performance, from combining artistic and analytical skills in preparation of the show, to recognizing that their roles in the individual scenes were integral to the success of the entire performance. Patience, trust, and self-confidence were also emphasized during the unit.

The Academy Awards performance was truly a celebration of the work the students had accomplished. Utilizing our computer lab, we designed invitations with 1930’s and 40’s Hollywood fashions being the requested attire for the parents and school community attending the awards show. One year, a parent even volunteered the time and supplies for our “actors” to make their own Mann’s Chinese Theater for our premiere, complete with hand prints and autographs in cement filled pizza boxes. Not surprisingly, all of the students win their categories, beating out industry favorites like Cary Grant and
Superintendent's Award Winner

Dr. Charles Wells, Tara Hewitt and Mike Salacci from Pacific Bell. Pacific Bell provided the additional $500 bonus for this award.

Vivian Leigh, and carry their Oscars home with pride and the satisfaction of a job well done. We also hosted an Academy Awards celebration party in the cafeteria.

Most importantly, however, students learned that the performance of the program was not the ultimate goal. From the classroom to the professional world, the process is just as important as the finished product. The performance is the culmination of many weeks of time management, collaboration, teamwork, and dedication. Students were successful because they participated and experienced the process, from historical research to their final bows.

Students were assessed on how active a role they played in this process. I developed a rubric to measure the students' effort, positive attitude, and group skills, as well as their writing, research, and mathematics skills.

One of the greatest attributes of the unit is its flexibility. The performance can include as many or as few film scenes as needed for your class size. The content is also adjustable, any historical era can be approached, studied, and celebrated in this award show format. If you are studying contemporary themes, you can use modern films and television programs for your scenes. If you are focusing on a historical time period, such as Elizabethan England, you can use Shakespeare's plays and music of the time as the subjects of your awards show presentation.

State Frameworks

Social Science: hands-on, in-depth study of historical periods, events, and themes, integrating and correlating social science with language arts. Language Arts: analyzing, evaluating, and responding to oral and written language. Performing Arts: drama, music, dance, set and costume design and construction. Cultural Literacy: the effect of the entertainment industry on the local, state, and national level.

Students

I have taught this unit for three years. During the 1997-98 school year, 60 fourth and fifth grade students participated in Hooray for Hollywood. The fourth graders wrote, built, and performed the program, while the fifth graders hosted and presented the awards. The class included 8 GATE students, 9 ADD students, 3 RSP students, 19 low performing students, and one physically challenged student.

Facilities/Materials

The show can be performed in a gym, a classroom, or an open space, and our costumes were found in parents' closets and thrift stores. Students can make their own paper mini-Oscars, design their own awards, or purchase miniature replicas. For those interested, I can supply copies of our script, photographs, videotaped performances, rubrics, lesson plans, music, and budgets.
Ladies and Gentlemen...What Are Your ‘Great Expectations’?

Grades 9-12
British Literature, School-to-Career Applications

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The Idea and Its Value
This integrated unit demonstrates the relevance of literature, requires critical analysis of characters, and employs personal application as students extend their knowledge of Charles Dickens’s Great Expectations Victorian society to themselves in today’s environment. Great Expectations is a story about a young boy named Pip who is given the opportunity to move up in society, be trained as a gentleman, and to achieve his “great expectations.” Likewise, my objective is to teach table manners to be used at the Prom, appropriate job interview attire, and all of the social graces that have faded since Victorian times.

We begin the unit with a notetaking assignment from an excellent article entitled “Your Lifetime Goal,” which focuses on high school students on the concept that career happiness is rarely linked to the amount of money obtained. Then while in the early stages of reading the novel and maintaining a log of (a) quotes and commentary, (b) interpretive questions, (c) chapter summaries, and (d) a character list, students begin working on an essay entitled, “My Great Expectations.” This essay assignment is approached with a positive attitude since it is a personal essay requiring introspection and an opportunity to express their personal, family, and career goals along with the effort that will be required to achieve these aspirations. Students are partnered for in-depth peer editing from a content and grammar usage perspective. The completed package is retained in their special business folder that ‘houses’ all school-to-work assignments. I’ve discovered that students seem to value these relevant assignments more highly.

As we proceed through the novel, lively discussions are held on Pip’s mistreatment of his dear brother-in-law, the pride that creeps into his character, the evolution of this character, and the various theme motifs. As the students become more and more involved in Pip’s life, they are especially impressed with his fixation on the beautiful, yet cold Estella. An analysis of love and what makes up true, everlasting love is vital for the seniors I teach.

One of our wind-up activities is the drawing of a chapter which students present to the class orally and in the written form of an article for a Victorian newspaper. Students may choose to write a news story, a gossip column, an editorial, or even a promotional article for the sale of a Victorian mansion based on their chapter assignment. These articles are produced in desktop publishing form and assembled on a large posterboard for display.

The highlight of this unit is our manners’ instruction, a manners quiz and our manners’ meal. We begin this activity with a journal prompt: students write a dialogue between two of the novel’s characters that might have occurred during dinner. They are to be creative, but historically accurate according to what they have learned about Victorian society. Then they act out these scripts with a partner. Afterwards, we view a Great Expectations video clip of the scene when Pip and Herbert are eating dinner. Herbert chastises Pip, “. . . it is not the custom to put the knife in the mouth—for fear of accidents—and that the fork should not be put further in than necessary. Also, the spoon is not generally used overhand, but under. This has two advantages. You get at your mouth better, and you save exercise with your right elbow.”

I then begin the manners instruction with social situations. Each etiquette principle is taught through role-plays, and all students have an opportunity to participate. Some of the social situations are proper introductions, walking down the street with a date, entering and exiting on an elevator, the courtesy of calling a date when one is running late, being a guest at someone’s house, and telephone etiquette. The table manners are also taught through role plays including how to set a table, how to place a napkin on one’s lap, the direction to pass food, the technique of buttering and eating a roll, eating hot soup, removing olive pits, etc. (This list is quite extensive. A handout is distributed which reviews the rules and a quiz is prepared the day after our manners meal. The manners meal is one of the highlights of the year. The girls wear a nice pants suit or skirt and blouse and the guys wear a shirt and tie with slacks other than jeans. Many complain that they don’t have such attire, but that doesn’t get them off. They are re-
The Ed Lyon Award Winner

reminded that they will need to plan for graduation, Grad Night, and job interviews, otherwise, they can borrow clothes from a friend. The students sign up for a food assignment and we have a marvelous potluck array of casseroles, salads, and desserts. This is one assignment that parents don’t complain about. I guess they’re pleased that their son or daughter is learning etiquette. On the day of the meal, all grumbling about their attire is replaced with proud smiles and flowing compliments paid to one another. The gentlemen need no prompting when it comes to seating the ladies and offering them first lining up at the buffet table. I stand with clipboard in hand and note any “talking with mouth full” or other improper behavior. Commendation is given in the form of extra credit points to the winning table. Especially gratifying is when I attend the Senior Prom two months later and witness the students showing off their manners and instructing other students at their table.

State Frameworks

These activities support the State Framework of core literature for grade twelve, along with infusing the SCANS competencies and school-to-career emphasis into the curriculum. Students further develop their writing skills, critical thinking skills, and discover the self-esteem involved in displaying proper manners.

Students

Thirty senior students, members of the Business Academy, participated in this unit. The class is an integrated group of College Prep and General level students ranging from those with limited English skills to high academic competency. The unit could be adapted to any language Arts program seeking to apply literature to real-world learning and to engage their students in the joy of relevant, stimulating learning.

Facilities/Materials

Location on campus with tables and chairs for the dinner, plates, silverware and napkins.

Outside Resources

These have included contributions from community business representatives who have attended the Business Seminar class attended by these same academy students to conduct mock job interviews and discuss desirable traits and competencies desired in the workplace.

Jim Motush from Pac Fab, Ginger Brandenburg, and Ed Lyon. Pac Fab provided a $500 "scholarship" for the winning grant recipient to use to attend workshops or seminars in education.
It's A Small World...Through the Arts!

Grades K-5
Visual and Performing Arts

More Information
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The Idea and Its Value
It's A Small World... Through the Arts is an exciting way to make dance, music, theater, and visual arts come alive in any classroom! Each of the art disciplines offers a rich body of knowledge that enables children to understand their world in a meaningful way. Children learn to appreciate their own culture, as well as many others across time and place.

Enthusiastic second graders travel to all seven continents, as their imaginations take them on a year-long journey around the world. We start with an in-depth look at the Northern Hemisphere, with a focus on our own United States of America. Children learn the national pride as they make red, white, and blue star-studded windsocks and sing patriotic tunes, such as "America," "My Country Tis of Thee," and "This Land Is Your Land." Learning some simple square dances always gets an energetic response! Using their five senses, children write poems about "This Land," and then illustrate them with silhouettes on watercolor wash backgrounds.

Our next destination is Europe, where we discover some of the world's most famous artists and composers. After we listen to Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, we paint the story's setting and characters. Students try their hands at cubism as they create Picasso Pumpkins out of corn painted paper. Children are quite impressed with their artistic talents at the painted watercolor landscapes or still lifes in the style of Monet's impressionism. In January, we make a brief stop in Antarctica. After discovering millions of penguins and only a few hearty scientists, we make snowflakes and our own 3-D penguins for a classroom decoration. It's too cold for dancing.

Asia is our next destination, just in time to celebrate Chinese New Year! We make red lanterns and decorate Chinese dragon masks and parade through the school with all "Gung Hai Fat Choi! Happy New Year!" After eating rice with chopsticks, we listen to the story of Grandfather Tang and learn about tangrams. Imaginations soar as children create their own tangerine pictures and stories!

Next we journey to the "Land Down Under," Australia. After looking at pictures of Aborigines' cave paintings, we make our own paint out of watered down crushed charcoal. Students love painting on rocks and pieces of eucalyptus bark! After singing some of the Aussies' favorite songs, like "Kookaburra," and "Waltzing Matilda," we wish them "C'yaay" as we set off to our next continent.

Our spring trip takes us to South America. We marvel at the great diversity of plants and animals found in the Amazon rainforest. After reading The Great Kapok Tree, the class transforms a well into a rainforest mural. Sounds of the rainforest whispering in the background completes the effect!

Our final stop is in the Heart Africa. After reading many African folktales, we perform one of Ron Eink's musicals, Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock. We make costumes, masks, scenery, and paper mache props. Family and friends enjoy our year-end performance followed by refreshments of fried bananas and fruit punch.

This "whirlwind" tour is filled with many activities that promote creativity, thinking, and joy! This unit is enriched as it integrates with other subjects across the curriculum. Students' art projects, poetry, photographs, etc., collected in a portfolio, makes an easy and very meaningful assessment piece. The success of all learners over the course of the year is clearly evidenced in the pride they show as they reflect upon and share their portfolios with fellow classmates, parents, and friends.

State Frameworks
It's A Small World... Through the Arts supports the Visual and Performing Arts framework for grades Kindergarten-12. As stated in the framework, each of the arts is studied from the vantage point of four dimensions: artistic perception, historical and cultural context, creative expression, and aesthetic value. This unit provides a wide variety of experiences where children develop self-expression, self-confidence, and experience a sense of accomplishment.

Students
I have enjoyed teaching this unit to second graders for over five years. Each year, the interests of the students, parent involvement, and teacher's preferences allows for the unit to grow and change. The journey is never exactly the same, but it is always a fun-filled adventure! All students are enthusiastic and thrive on using their creativity to express themselves.

Facilities/Materials
Art supplies found in most classrooms are used in the projects. A list of books and music resources is available upon request. This unit is easily adaptable to any grade level. Teachers can incorporate any of their favorite artists, composers, projects, plays, etc. to meet the needs and interests of their students.

Outside Resources
None are necessary, but contributions from parents and guest speakers are always a bonus!
Light and the Electromagnetic Spectrum

The Idea and Its Value

Light and the Electromagnetic Spectrum is an integrated, interdisciplinary unit on the science of light, color and our sense of sight. It culminates with a tie-dye lab on the physics of color.

A trend in clothing styles among middle school students (the 60's and 70's came back) and a shortage of textbooks due to increased student population motivated the development of this unit.

Getting away from the more common textbook/ worksheet approach, students learn through a variety of lab activities and interdisciplinary assignments. Because the unit follows our unit on sound, students begin by making simple oscilloscopes and changing the sound waves of their own voices into light waves on the school walls with reflected light rays from the sun. Instruction continues on energy forms and emphasizes the electromagnetic spectrum. The topic of visible light leads us into lessons on the human eye as a sensory organ. Students wrote a 1-3-9 essay on how their lives would change if they lost their eyesight, test their own eyesight and learn the structures of the eye before dissecting a cow's eye. The lens is one structure that raises many questions following the dissection and is used as a natural transition to learning about optical instruments. Microscopes are used to observe a bioluminescent single celled algae. Students are given instructions on proper care of their algae, and the process of photosynthesis is reviewed and related to caring for their packet of algae. Students observe the blue-green glow of the algae at home and are encouraged to explain the uniqueness of the algae with their families. Next we learn about color by inviting our art teacher in to facilitate student creation of color wheels and integrate the art and science of color. The unit culminates with our tie dye shirt lab. Students really enjoy the day and because they have to wait for the fiber reactive dyes to react with the cellulose molecules of their cotton shirts, there is a lot of anticipation in waiting to see their finished product.

The tie-dye lab was the most memorable activity we did this year. It was creative, fun and educational. Since clothing is something most teens can relate to, it helped make the learning about light more fun. Learning about the pigment mixing, primary and secondary colors of light and pigment was something that kept me interested.

-Kelly Smith, student

State Frameworks

Connections to the CA Science Framework include the underlying themes of Energy, Systems and Interactions and Stability.

Students

This is the third year that 190 of my eighth graders have done this unit. It is now to the point that it is worth sharing with other teachers. Student evaluations and assessment results indicate that the lessons are effective.

Facilities/Materials

Lights, Cameras... Barn Dance

Grades 2-8
Drama, Art, P.E., Social Studies, Music, ESL, Literature, Math

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The Idea and Its Value

Seven year olds steal the show with their dramatic performance of the book Barn Dance by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault. Reading, singing, musical accompaniment, drama and square dancing are the spectacular results of 9 months preparation.

We introduce the unit with a barn dance in a Reading Rainbow video. We assign partners and squares and begin teaching square dancing for PE. Dancing reinforces language concepts of front, back, side, through, over, around, left/right and more, with movement. These language skills benefit all students, especially English language learners and those in special education.

Integrating lessons across the curriculum, we read Eric Carle’s Rooster’s Off to See the World. We do social studies activities about peanut and banana farming. For science we may study plant and animal life cycles. Our district English Language Development units correlate with the study of farming and plants. The writing component of our language arts curriculum includes writing about farm life, animals, square dancing, and reactions to the various activities across the curriculum. Students create math story problems. Math applications, measurement and other problem solving skills are taught while creating our many visual displays.

Every student has a part in the program. They are guided to read the text with flair and intonation. Some become musicians and work together to create accompanying sound effects. Reading and interpreting the text is a valuable problem solving process. As the need for sound effects grows, so does the need for instruments. Groups of students delve into the science of vibrations and sound, make maracas and string instruments and determine which musical instruments best express the elements of the story. Which instrument, for example, sounds like magic.

Reader’s theater and dance has grown to include singing, movement, sign language, poster illustrations, animal puppets and the unfurling of a stage length, student made, American flag.

The self-concept development of the students during this unit is phenomenal. Everyone is successful in their part because of repetition... and the nature of theater. Any ad libbed moments are an incorporated addition, not a mistake.

Students make every prop and decoration used to transform our cafeteria into a barn. They put together paper mache apples and pumpkins. They create a life-size scarecrow by stuffing tissue paper.

State Frameworks

Cooperation, common to all California frameworks, is central to this unit which integrates Performing & Visual Arts with Language Arts, Music and Social Studies. The curriculum based show reinforces listening, speaking, reading, writing and problem solving. The nature of live dramatics goes beyond the classroom and connects to the real world.

Students

We have done this unit annually with 60 2nd graders for the past six years. RSP, Special Day class students and English Language Learners are successfully included. The activities can be adapted to any grade level by choosing more difficult dances and more complicated songs. This unit easily lends itself to third and fourth grade studies of westward expansion and the pioneers. Square dancing has often been a part of upper grade physical education curriculum.

Facilities/Materials

Our school cafeteria has a stage. We use a set of 19 Barn Dance books. A tape player or sound system is needed, along with a variety of musical instruments and basic art supplies for props and artwork.

Outside Resources

You may include a local field trip to a farm. The Humane Society brings farm animals into the classroom. Junior High visual arts classes can be involved with video-taping performances.
Personification of America

The Idea and Its Value
In the past, America has been personified in several ways depending on which impression of America one wanted to give. As the goddess "Columbia," she was portrayed as bountiful and strong, representing the new hope for a new land. As "Uncle Sam," America took on a more forceful personality demanding response from citizens who wanted to keep the country free, and warning foes that America was not to be taken lightly. As the "Statue of Liberty," she beckoned immigrants to come work hard to succeed and share her vast resources. The use of personification helps make the abstract concept of what America represents more approachable and easier to understand.

In this one-week unit, students create a new personification of America, representing the America of the 21st century. In a prose or descriptive essay they might picture America as the CEO of a major corporation, a soccer mom, a soldier of fortune, a mother with too many children, peacekeeper of the world, or a technological giant. Students are forced to think in abstract terms, yet analyze and respond using concrete imagery. They are also exposed to propaganda techniques used to rally support for patriotic activities as well as antiwar slogans, etc., that sway public perceptions and opinions.

In preparation, students study literary terms that include imagery and personification, and as a class brainstorm ideas for the concept of "Love." Then we discuss personifications such as "Cupid" that are used to represent the concept. Then they are given the assignment to create a new personification of America. We discuss such possibilities as those listed above; then they work individually on the following:

- they develop a list of at least five character traits that express the ideals and beliefs of today's society in regard to America (such as "beleaguered," "protective," "all-powerful," "world's watchdog," etc.);
- in three paragraphs, they describe the physical appearance of a man or woman who personifies America, how this person would behave, and put this person in a situation that makes a statement about their view (such as a Rambo-like character rescuing people from the grips of a nasty foe, or a homeless shelter worker handing out food);
- they develop their personification of America as a man or woman through their description of appearance, behavior, character traits, and method of dealing with the situation from above in a poem or essay at least one page in length;
- they create a political cartoon that depicts America as their personification dealing with the above situation.

Grading an assignment like this can be broken down into segments:
- Conceptualization—the thought process that went into their view, and how well they explained it.
- Writing—how well the essay or poem is developed, using standard writing practices, and if it seems complete.
- Visualization—the visual representation representative of what was written in the description.

State Frameworks
This activity supports the State Framework goals of applying high-level thinking in detecting propaganda, developing voice and style, emphasizing new assessment methods (including advanced visual literacy), and confronting social and political issues.

Students
In past years, 7th and 8th graders and 300+ 8th grade students have completed components of this project.

Facilities/Materials
While no special supplies are required to complete this assignment, the following are helpful: classroom art supplies, samples of political cartoons, and pictures of the Statue of Liberty, Uncle Sam, and the goddess Columbia.
Peter's Patch: An Integrated, Interdisciplinary Unit on Gardening with Peter Rabbit and His Friends

The Idea and Its Value

Peter's Patch is an integrated, interdisciplinary unit that ties science-based gardening with the classic tales of Beatrix Potter. The literature comes to life for the children through creative, hands-on connections in the garden.

The unit addresses the significance of reading and writing in the first grade curriculum with its thematic base in the Language Arts. Through the science of agriculture and botany, the students learn about seed germination, row crops, life cycles, beneficial insects, dairy farming and nutrition. The students explore the art of garden design, the measurement of cooling, the responsibility of caring for rabbits, and the performances of reader theaters, and the Bunny Hop.

The idea of Peter's Patch came out of a need to connect reading to all other curricular areas and the importance of teaching agriculture in the classroom. As I planned my year, there was never enough time to go to the garden because of all the core curriculum that I had to get through. The Hansen Trust Ag Workshop inspired me to make it a priority. So I created this unit to motivate the first graders to read and write while learning about the history and economy of our city and county.

Students use high level thinking skills as they become scientists in their living laboratory, Peter Rabbit's Garden. They are actively involved in observing and investigating. In addition to their writing in their Peter Rabbit Journal, the students keep an observation log recording the happenings of Peter's Patch. Through plant experiments the students manipulate, classify, hypothesize, and test ideas that are brought up from the literature text and their own imagination. They learn to apply their experiences in the garden to their real world. During a long session of double digging, one student commented: "This sure is hard work. Those people in the fields must get paid a lot of money." This prompted a conversation on the jobs of field workers. By the end of the discussion I had to hold back the tears in my eyes as I realized that through the work in the garden, the students were developing a deeper and richer understanding of the world of agriculture than I could have imagined.

The garden time became more important to the students than recess time. The students had an incentive to be on their best behavior (unlike naughty Peter Rabbit) so they could visit the garden to work or to spend some time with our new garden pets, Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny. They were encouraged to practice their reading skills so they could perform Peter and His Friends, a reader’s theater, for the kindergartners and the second graders at the end of the year. The students were looking forward to when they would harvest their crops, and prepare nutritious dishes such as carrot muffins, cucumber salad, and vegetable soup. The students made character masks, learned garden songs, and practiced the Bunny Hop for the Peter Rabbit party.

All learners were successful in this unit because of its hands-on, exploratory nature. The students who have a difficult time typing still and learning in the traditional style blossomed in the outdoor setting. After learning about beneficial insects and watching their own plants grow, even the so-called "bulbs" of the class would let a spider pass unharmed, and lovingly nurture and protect their plants.

The students reading and writing skills demonstrated through their journals and standardized tests improved throughout the unit. When it was time to produce a class project for the school science fair, the students had a better understanding of key science concepts and skills. Through continued discussion they conveyed their new knowledge and appreciation of agriculture and nature.

State Frameworks


Students

Sixty first graders participated. It is easily adaptable to any primary grade.

Facilities/Materials

Work is done in the classroom and the garden. The materials needed are Beatrix Potter books, garden patch, tools, seeds, rabbits (optional).

Outside Resources

4-H Rabbit Information
Mass Media Literacy

The Idea and Its Value

Mass Media Literacy is a unit designed to heighten students' understanding of the nature of the mass media, its techniques, and its impact. The purpose of the unit is to make students aware of the potential influence and effects of the media.

The four week unit begins by examining the propaganda techniques used in the media (bandwagon, testimonial, faulty cause and effect, etc.) Students cut out examples of these from newspapers and magazines, or tape examples used on TV or played on the radio. After identifying the propaganda technique, the students answer such questions as: Is there value in the product or are they creating a need? How are the women portrayed? Any stereotypes? What values are portrayed? Does the ad represent a real person or an ideal? The class then discusses the commercials that fail us by milk the myths found in the media such as the myths that the good life consists of buying a lot of expensive possessions and the idea that happiness is available through the next consumer purchase.

We then discuss the difference between biased and unbiased news. Students not only find examples of both, but also write an article on the school, one biased and one unbiased.

The media unit continues with students critiquing a product's claim. With a partner, students run an experiment on a product's advertisement, report their findings to the class, and write a business letter to the particular company about the validity of the advertisement. Students love this and I’ve seen some interesting reports. One student wrote to Kellogg stating he could hear Snick and Crackle when he poured the milk but he couldn’t hear Pop! Another student wrote to Skittles that when she opened the bag of candy no rainbow appeared. After critiquing a product, students work in groups to create their own product. Students have created such outlandish things as an edible phone and shoes with springs on the bottom. Depending on the invention, students may opt to sketch rather than actually make the product. Students advertise their product to the class using a propaganda technique they’ve learned.

Students also critique TV shows. In their review, they look at such things as how the character solves the problem and what life lessons were learned. Students then create, either by themselves or with a partner, a new episode for the show. In their 8-3 page script, they must examine a social issue facing teens today. This leads into their last assignment which involves music, something all students like. Students examine song lyrics and music videos for themes or central messages and social issues. Students state why they like the song, what it means to them, if they agree with what the song is saying, and if it is in line with their values.

I enjoy doing this unit for many reasons. It encourages positive student attitudes and behavior as students are paying particular attention to the values portrayed in the media. It feels an overwhelming need to do this unit since the media is perhaps the leading influence on students today—their view of reality, their formation of values, their search for identity.

The unit also promotes use of higher level thinking skills as students analyze the media. They examine propaganda techniques, distinguish between biased and unbiased news, create and advertise their own product, and critique TV shows, movies, music videos, and song lyrics.

I am able to measure the success of the unit by assessing student achievement via discussion, application on questions, tests, and evaluation of written analysis of the various forms of media.

Lastly, the unit addresses the needs of all learners by tapping into creative thinking as well as objective analysis of information.

State Frameworks

The unit supports many aspects of the Language Arts Frameworks: reading, writing, speaking, listening, group discussion, interdisciplinary connection, and high level thinking activities.

Students

Students were in the eighth grade and at various academic levels from low to high, all successful. A total of 190 students participated in 1997-98

Facilities/Materials

Magazines, VCR, CD player, taped episodes of TV shows, commercials, music videos, and songs. Any information on propaganda, tapes, etc., is available for teachers interested in adapting the unit.

Grades 6-8

Language Arts

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Marshall's Design
Personalizing Poetry

Grades: 4-8
Language Arts, Art, Performing Arts

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The Idea and Its Value

Personalizing Poetry is an integrated unit for grades 4-8 which allows students to create a poetry environment and perform musically-based poetry, while also encouraging their associative, interpretive and imaginative perceptions of poetry skills that can be used in writing their own poetry. This 2-4 week unit allows middle school students to actively control their study of poetry, while also enforcing the idea that all poetry is accessible and open to interpretation. I wanted students to feel like Emily Dickinson when she said, "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?"

To create poetry in a jar, students read through poetry books and choose a poem which appeals to their individual ideas of an artistic interpretation. Next, they copy the poem onto a index card, citing the title and author. Students may also use their own poetry for this project. At home they find a clean jar of any size, and create a miniature interpretation of their poem. In the past jars have been crammed full of the family garbage to illustrate Shel Silverstein's, "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out," as well as a painstakingly created miniature set for Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," complete with a diminutive black hand-carved raven residing on a library windowsill. The jar poems are orally presented in class and then beautifully showcased in the school office and library. In this way all students are spotlighted and made to feel successful.

Next we move into the performance based aspect of the unit when the students explore different sound effect devices used in poetry: onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance. Percussion instruments are made available so the students can accompany different poems that lend themselves to musical interpretation. The poems musical elements are further enhanced by the students' bongo, shakers, cow bells, triangles, flutes, etc. Poems with imagery that suggest sound would be best. Students select groups and choreograph a dance or movement to accompany the rhythm and beat they create with instruments. The resulting interpretive performance creates instant and powerful drama as students perform throughout the school. Students who are initially frightened of performing return "high" from the experience, and most eager to enter additional classrooms so they can continue performing.

A favorite culminating activity for the unit is to ask students to bring in their favorite lyrics from a popular top-40-type song. Students are given an overhead and asked to teach one stanza of the song to the class. They are to highlight examples of poetic devices we have used throughout this course of study. Most are shocked to find that the most idolized rock icons are really poets! The students easily point out simile, metaphor, rhyme, imagery, figurative language, onomatopoeia, alliteration, etc.

The value of this unit is that students learn to appreciate poetry on a personal and relatable level which usually lead's them being able to express their own thoughts and feelings in original poems and other writings.

State Frameworks

This unit supports the state framework for Language Arts, Art, and Performing Arts.

Students

150 seventh and eighth grade students participated in this unit, but it is easily adaptable to elementary as well as high school students. This unit addresses the needs of all learners in the classroom, because it encourages multi-level learners to examine and interpret poetry from diverse intellectual levels in a very personal manner.

Facilities/Materials

Our school provided the library and the music room, as well as opening classrooms and administrative doors so that the students could showcase their performance based and artistic based work.
Ragtime!

The Idea and Its Value


Using the soundtrack from the Tony Award-winning musical, Ragtime, students are introduced to "the music of something beginning, an era exploding, a century spinning." The Ragtime era, 1880-1910, was a time of dramatic changes in our country, many of which can be explored with musical introductions from the musical. In the "Harry Ford" students are introduced to the dehumanization of the assembly-line worker ("Every worker a cog in motion") which contributes to the eventual rise of unions, an issue addressed in the play. "Back to Before" provides insight into the hearts of women engaged in the women's suffrage movement ("There was a time when you were the person in motion. I was your wife. It never occurred to you more. You were my sky, my moon and my stars and my ocean. We can never go back to before."). "Oh We Reach That Day" provides a compelling introduction to the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement.

"As tuned in as the students are to the music used in the unit, what excites students and teachers the most is "Ragtime Dress-Up Day." At the beginning of the unit each student reaches into a basket containing the names of 150 characters from this era. Some, like James J. 370street, are at the end of their lives; others, like Duke Ellington, are children. They all - poets, politicians, tycoons and entertainers, make memorable contributions to the issues of the day. Students conduct research about their character, developing a written biography and an oral presentation (not to exceed two minutes) which addresses their character's contribution to American history.

Prior to the scheduled Ragtime dress-up day, every staff member is given short, easy forms with space for the student's real name and check-off spaces for the following questions: Was the student able to tell you their character's name? When and where they were born? Their contribution to American history? And when and where they died? Then, on the scheduled Ragtime dress-up day, each student comes to school dressed as their character. Before school, during breakfast and during lunch, participating students are given the opportunity to earn extra credit by telling the willing teachers about their character. All presentations have to be in first person - "I am Harry Houdini." "I am Fannie Farmer." The participating teachers quickly fill out and sign the forms, and it becomes the student's responsibility to turn in the forms to their own teacher.

The excited students delighted the teachers and other staff! So much so, in fact, that in several classes the planned curriculum was abandoned so that students could talk at "themselves." Participating teachers begged for more forms! (The PE teachers were so impressed they told the kids not to change out of their costumes, PE teachers held the record for the most mini-presentations.)

May is a tough month for eighth-grade students and teachers. Distracted by graduation, high school registration and end-of-the-year festivities, it is often difficult to keep students focused on curriculum. The Ragtime project kept our eighth-grade students excited about history right up to the end of the year.

State Frameworks

The unit provides a framework within which the teacher can address many of the issues of the Progressive Era as desired. The research and development of the written biography satisfy a portion of the Language Arts standards. Because of the relative obscurity of most of the characters to be researched (students cannot find all the information they need in an encyclopedia) the research portion of the project lends itself well to internet use.

Students

Every eighth-grade student (135) was involved.

Facilities/Materials

The teacher will need to purchase a copy of the soundtrack from Ragtime and procure a CD or tape player, if the music is to be used. It is helpful to create overheads with the lyrics for the kids to read as the music plays, especially if literary themes (ships and oceans, for example, are used as symbols throughout the play) will be discussed. Students must have access to research materials to complete the biographies.

Grade 8

Social Science,
Language Arts

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VCEDA
Reel Movies, Hollywood Style
An Integrated, Interdisciplinary Unit on Movie Making

Grades 2-8
Science, Technology
Language Arts, Math, Fine Arts

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The Idea and Its Value

Reel Movies, Hollywood Style is an integrated, interdisciplinary unit on the study of movie making from its history up to the present science and technology behind today's blockbusters. The unit involves a hands-on approach to learning with a culminating " Academy Awards" party where the students' original movies will be viewed. The students work together in cooperative groups for three sessions per week for twelve weeks. This unit addresses writing and performing activities based on screenplay techniques, the history of early movie making, the science and math of special effects, the art of set and costume design, and the technology of filmmaking.

The idea of the unit Reel Movies, Hollywood Style, came from a previous unit on optical illusions where the students were intrigued by the relationship between special effects in the movies and optical illusions, and wanted to know more on how to create them.

Students started the unit by forming cooperative groups and naming their production companies. They studied skills needed to write screenplays such as character development, plot setting, conflict, dialogue, and acting instructions. The students read excerpts from real screenplays, such as Scream, The English Patient, Good Will Hunting, and Little House on the Prairie. They were introduced to story boarding and how to sequence events in movies. After practice they created their own original screenplay. In the movie making process, the students had to analyze and synthesize all parts of a script to create the final product, an original student-made movie.

Students had the opportunity to create some of the special effects, "Hollywood style", with a fake blood lab. The students used science and math to create the most realistic fake blood to use in the movies, and they experimented with materials that makeup artists use in the movies today. The blood material and other special effect information was gathered from the Internet. Students were motivated to learn what real blood is made up of and how it works in the body so they could make the most realistic blood possible. A makeup artist from Hollywood demonstrated how to make and apply scars made from plaster molds, aging techniques, AB blood, and smoking skin. This was a great introduction and discussion point for careers in movie making.

In the production stage they learned the significance of such skills as art direction, interpreting characters, movement, and acting instructions. They were able to run their lines at home with family members. Students practiced together and participated in one full dress rehearsal. Within the production stage, the students learned firsthand how the performing arts and technology interweave in movie making. When the day of filming arrived, camera angles had to be noted, props in place, special effects ready, and the timing perfected.

Reel Movies, Hollywood Style, encourages positive student attitude and behavior because of its relevance to their own "trip" world. Students enjoyed making the connections to what they learned and movies they have seen. All learners were motivated because they used their own ideas to form an original movie and felt important to be apart of the movie making process. Students had the honor of showing their film at the Academy Awards party where family and friends could enjoy their work. Students were teacher evaluated on their screenplay, and had a chance to evaluate the other groups' movies.

State Frameworks


Students

Eighty gifted and talented students in grades 3-5 and ninety-ninth grade students participated in the 1998-1999 school year. It is easily adaptable to all learners.

Facilities/Materials

The materials that are needed are: books and videos on movie making, movie scripts, video camera, tapes, VCR. Most costumes, props and set designs were brought in by the students.

Outside Resources

Remember Me

The Idea and Its Value
My Holocaust remembrance project has the goals of honoring the children who were murdered by the Nazis and making their memory meaningful to the students who create children's books based on the Holocaust victims' lives. Each student then becomes a teacher of both history and tolerance while reading their books to younger students and exploring the subject of prejudice. Prior to the book project, the students have researched the anti-Jewish laws and created a pictorial timeline leading up to the “Final Solution,” designed a floor plan of the hiding place of Anne Frank, and completed the reading of the play, The Diary of Anne Frank. Students have also viewed a video at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and are familiar with the procedures of entering the museum and receiving a picture of a Holocaust victim.

When the students enter my classroom on Holocaust Remembrance Day, they are handed a card with the picture of a child who has died in the Holocaust. Each card has a website number where the student can find the child’s story on the Internet. This can be used when students are researching the Internet and completes the research. The students are given the following criteria for designing an original children's book based on their child's life:

1. Design a creative cover for your book complete with a title, illustration, author, and illustrator’s name.

2. Include a dedication page for your child that includes their picture.

3. Create a minimum of five illustrated pages telling the story in an interesting and descriptive way, including highlights of their life, conflicts, and ultimately the details of their death in a dramatic fashion (passes away vs. died) geared toward fourth graders (9 years old). We want to emphasize their life, not their death.

4. End your book on a positive, hopeful note as in the following examples:
   - I'm not really gone because you are reading my story (1st person)
   - Gretta is smiling from heaven because you are telling her story (3rd person)
   - A tree is planted in Israel for me to help give life to a Jewish nation.
   - My life is a powerful lesson that screams NEVER AGAIN to the world.

5. The back cover of the book should include a brief biography of the author, picture of the author, and reviews of the book by newspapers, magazines, and literary associations. You may be creative on the reviews and embellish the truth.

6. Everyone will read their book to the class on the due date.

Later the students visited fourth grade classrooms and read their books to the class emphasizing the message of tolerance.

The value of my project is best illustrated in the Jewish expression “T”shaim” (to live). Let us remember the children who were forgotten during a time of terror. Each of my students became a sacred candle of remembrance that glowed with the light of tolerance. History truly came alive in their hearts.

State Frameworks
This unit supports the state framework for Language Arts and Social Studies.

Students
Ninety 8th grade Honors students participated in this project. It is easily adaptable to all learners and could be implemented with students at the High School, particularly in the 10th grade when the Holocaust is part of the history and literature curriculum.

Facilities/Materials
Our school provided computers, Internet access, and basic materials.
The Idea and Its Value

Show Me the Monet is a two to three week culminating activity that allows students to combine print and electronic research, hands on art activities and multimedia technology into a presentation that reflects knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of famous artists. Small groups of students in a semester elective visual arts class research a famous artist. They may choose from a list provided by the teacher or submit their own choice for teacher approval. Access to the Internet, computers, and television is provided in the classroom and school library. They are guided in their Internet and print research by the teacher and the school librarian to find, evaluate and select information and images that appeal to their own aesthetic senses. Students are introduced to the multimedia authoring program, HyperStudio. HyperStudio format, the concept of cards in a stack, is demonstrated. Students plan their stacks to include biographical and stylistic information as well as aesthetic valuing. When the HyperStudio project is finished, students access art materials and produce their own artistic piece based on the style of their chosen artist.

After the research is completed, four components of aesthetic valuing are taught to and practiced by students in whole class lessons on selected works of art. Step One involves describing what is happening in the artwork. Describing Edward Munch’s The Scream, a student wrote, “there is a man standing on a bridge. He is screaming. The sky is swirls of orange and black.” In Step Two, students discuss the elements and principles of design the artist used: “The artist emphasizes the screaming face by making it a light color against a darker background. Movement is created by the streaks in the sky and the lines of the bridge. They move the viewer’s eye to the figure.” Step Three is an opinion of what mood or feeling the artist was trying to convey: “The artist is trying to show us fear or horror.” Finally, Step Four requires a judgement about the work: “I like this painting because it makes you feel what the man feels, scared.”

All of the information gathered is transferred to HyperStudio cards. Students then select images from the Internet, downloading them to the computers and import them as graphic objects to their cards. Using the paint tools in the program, they add their own designs. Cards are connected using buttons, and a title page, bibliography, and ending page are added.

In the meantime, while awaiting access to computers, students use paints, pastels, or other media to create their own art projects which reflect their artist’s style. Finally, the computer is hooked to the TV/VCR. As the HyperStudio stacks play on the monitor, the VCR records the images onto VHS tape. A video camera is used to input the students’ original art, and finally audio narration and music are dubbed to the tape. The entire creation, which includes the HyperStudio stack and student art, is then presented to the class, broadcast through the school’s closed-circuit TV network, and is shown at Open House. Students are thrilled to see their hard work finally assembled and shown to other classrooms and parents.

State Frameworks

California State Visual and Performing Arts Frameworks require four components in a comprehensive art program: artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context and aesthetic valuing are included in this unit. Visual and performing arts technology component calls for teachers of the arts to be knowledgeable about and use current electronic technologies.

Students

A heterogeneous group of 45 8th grade students in two semester-long elective art classes participated.

Facilities/Materials

Students have access to computers in the art room, including one that has Internet access. Internet, as well as print resources are available in the school library. Many students also have Internet access at home. The school has a site license for HyperStudio. TV, VCR and video camera.

Outside Resources

Students are encouraged to use home and public library resources.
Smile! You’re on LCNN in Spanish!

The Idea and Its Value

Performing a program in a foreign language is an effortless way to reinforce vocabulary, syntax, idiomatic expressions and, even the history and culture of the target language. The two sets of 25 seventh graders who entered my Spanish/Music exploratory each quarter learn a minimum of 30 songs. The students choose their nine to ten favorite songs to include in a program. We practice these and develop ways for our audience to better understand the meanings of the songs through props, costumes, and movement. When the program is somewhat planned out, about the eighth week into the quarter, students from the Video Production class, LCNN (Las Colinas Network News), watch our production and offer constructive pointers on staging and background. Finally, after a few weeks of video-taping, editing, re-taping, and more editing, the class has a close-to-professional program which is broadcast into every classroom, 4th through 6th grades at our school.

Parents and other students are invited to a live performance which usually occurs during one of the last class periods of the quarter as a culminating activity. This takes place in our Performance Hall. Students from the Video Production class are present to explain to the audience how they were able to enhance the final presentation for the video. Of course, all members of the audience are amazed at the expertise that these twelve and thirteen year olds possess after such a short amount of time. What a great way to build self-esteem and community appreciation!

From the first day of class, I introduce music into my classroom. We always begin with the “Greeting Song,” a series of common phrases in English, then Spanish. By the third day, the students already know the “Backwards Song” and the “More We Get Together, the Happier We Are.” This rate of song-introduction continues throughout the quarter. I divide the songs into four types. They are songs which:

1. Teach vocabulary only and are bilingual... “Let’s Sing the Colors”
2. Are translated loosely from English to Spanish with a familiar tune... “Six Little Ducks”
3. Are original and introduce particular vocabulary... “Tengo una Familia Grande” or play by backs, (where an old tune has new vocabulary)
4. Are common cultural songs... “La Cucaracha”

The songs are taught in order to enhance the current unit being introduced in class.

As the production is planned during the eighth or ninth week of class, students from the Video Production class watch and offer suggestions on movement, props, and background use. They often suggest better methods for communicating what the songs are saying. They also give pointers on where and how to stand. Each song is taped separately and viewed daily by the Video Production class. The crew continues to fine-tune the program by constructively criticizing the lighting, voice projection, location and grouping of singers, possible close-ups, etc.

Students often wear costumes and role play the story for the cultural songs in order to depict the action. While working on the stage production of “La Cucaracha,” the students noted the quick reference to Pancho Villa without a shirt on and a tray towards the end of the song. Immediately, a poster-sized picture was sketched and colored in by one group while another promised to bring their baby brother’s toy train the next day to be used as a prop. What a great team-work!

Parents from Spanish Conversation/Music and the Video Production class thoroughly enjoy watching the live production and the video. Students viewing the video are thrilled that they can actually understand a foreign language! They can’t wait to have their turn to learn Spanish since it is so easy!

This lesson was loosely adapted from a third through fifth grade GATE Spanish summer school class I taught several years ago when I felt somewhat obligated to come up with a culminating activity. My son had taken the Video Production class in 7th grade. Since he was my classroom aide, he directed the students and gave several suggestions. His video tape was shown at the school board meeting as an example of a positive summer school product. This sense of lessons was a natural progression from his effort.

State Frameworks

This unit supports the California State Framework in Foreign Language and Technology Education.

Students

150 7th and 8th grade students have rotated through this school year.

Facilities/Materials

A good sound system is helpful as well as several video cameras and computers.
Step into Fitness

Grades 8-12
Physical Education

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The Idea and Its Value

"Let's get fit for life!" Through step aerobics students learn a low impact, readily available activity/lifetime sport, which can be performed in the privacy of home or at a local gym. Students learn the basic steps: basic, over the top, V-step, step-left, straddle down, straddle up, turn step, and l-step. Guided practice begins the 2 to 3 week unit. As the facilitator, the teacher presents a simple routine: a basic right, tap, basic left, tap, V-step right, tap, V-step left, tap, repeat the sequence for about 9 or 3 songs. Each day a new step is added to the sequence. Variations of arm movements, knee lifts, and hops are added. Circuit training can be used to reinforce the basic steps. At each station a different step is written on a card. Every 60 seconds students rotate to a new station and perform a new step for one minute.

The practical application of math skills comes to life as students calculate their personal target heart rate: 220 - your age = Maximum Heart Rate. Different training zones are computed by students: Healthy Heart Zone = 50 to 60% of MHR, Fat Burn Zone = 60 to 70% of MHR, Aerobic Zone = 70 to 80% of MHR, Endurance Zone = 80 to 90% of MHR, Athletic Zone = 90 to 100% of MHR. The benefits of each zone are discussed and students assess which zone is appropriate for them. A six-second-target heart rate is calculated. During each workout a personal heart rate is taken and exercise intensity is adjusted.

FIT guidelines for exercise (Frequency, Intensity, and Time) are experienced during this unit.

Prior to designing routines, students preview former student routines and participate with a professional video workout. In small groups, students design and choreograph their own routines using the steps learned in class. Creativity abounds as students experiment with different arm movements and combining steps together. The routine criteria are simple: perform three different steps and repeat the steps three times each. A sample routine could be a basic right, 4 V-step left, and 8 Step-left right. Perform this sequence 3 times. Geometrical shapes are discussed as students determine the linear, circular, staggered, symmetrical or asymmetrical step arrangements on the floor. Coherence and uniformity create a natural cooperative group.

Routines are video taped and previewed by students. Analysis of the routine is indicated on a personal checklist. With the checklist as a guide, students write an evaluation which includes the strengths and ways to improve. Several video copies of the routines are made and students check them out for overnight use in their home. Students teach their families their routines. Family members perform the steps on the floor; a step box is not necessary. Students calculate a personal target heart rate for each family member. Families have the importance of exercise taught to them by a relative at home.

Fitness activities help control heart disease and maintain proper weight. Skill development in youth gives them the tools to be active for a lifetime. Step aerobics is a lifetime cardiovascular exercise. One student said with a smile, "This really makes me sweaty" and another reported "I did the steps with my mom on Saturday at home."

State Frameworks

The Physical Education framework encourages emphasis on individual sport, rather than team sport. The FIT guidelines for physical exercise are introduced and students learn to calculate their individual exercise target heart rate. This is also a time when students develop confidence to overcome anxieties associated with attempting something new and making new friends.

Students

I have taught step aerobics for 3 years to 900 7th and 8th grade boys and girls each year. Participating in this unit are bilingual, RSP and SDC students. It would be appropriate for 6th grade and higher.

Facilities/Materials

Step aerobics boxes, video camera, and music with 120 to 130 beats per minute (available in PE catalogs).

Outside Resources

Field trip to a fitness gym.
The Beowulf “Bayeux” Tapestry Project

The Idea and Its Value
With the Bayeux Tapestry as inspiration, students create a work of art depicting the epic story of Beowulf. First, they research and observe the Bayeux Tapestry and find that it is an important source of information about the Norman Conquest of England. Students marvel at the curious mixture of fact and fancy with portrayals of historic events and scenes from Anglo-Saxon fables. Additionally, students observe how the details of the tapestry offer keys to the questions of the rise of chivalry as a political force.

After reading Beowulf, the students create their own panels transforming the powerful written epic into vivid visual scenes. The individual lines assigned to each student become guidelines for their panels. Students write about main ideas and symbols, and discussions with their groups enable them to derive deeper meanings in Beowulf. Panels must blend into the other, thus requiring students to work closely with the students whose lines precede and follow their own. Together their panels form a living tapestry as they join them to bring the written epic to life. Different student strengths are accessed through the variety of modes of expression, cooperative learning, and divergent thinking.

Students are placed into groups where they draw upon their critical thinking skills and imagination. They use interpersonal skills involving cooperation and compromise to reach consensus in order to create their tapestry with its specific set of colors and borders to be used by all students involved in the project. Students create the tapestry using poster board strips measuring the same dimensions and color scheme. They meet in groups to discuss their individual panel assignments and get peer input regarding important elements in each scene concerning overall themes, symbols, important cultural information, hero cycles, etc. They dramatically form their living tapestry by interlocking their panels and telling the epic tale orally as they join their panel to the one before it.

The project begins the epic unit (two to three weeks) and takes a minimum of three class periods (students complete individual aspects of the project for homework) for the tapestry project work itself plus time reading and discussing the epic and hero cycle.

Additionally, students examine aspects of literary heroes and real-world equivalents as they observe the various qualities exhibited throughout different cultures and times. CD Rom and internet research help students become aware of the changing attributes of heroes and the role of media in the perception of heroes. They examine some of the following issues:

1) How does their panel get across the main idea of their assigned section?
2) How is symbolism used in the epic?
3) Have their feelings changed about the definition of a hero in today’s world?
4) Does Beowulf fit into the hero cycle?
5) Has the criteria of a hero evolved given the universal qualities of people?
6) What aspects of the past and present unite us as fellow human beings?

State Frameworks
This unit supports many elements of the framework: high level thinking activities, interdisciplinary activities, drama, accessing technology, group activities, integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing that guide students through a range of thinking processes. The framework also encourages collaboration and writing tasks that include presentation.

Students
Over the last three years this unit was implemented in heterogeneous ESL (ESL) classes of high school students as well as senior English college preparation classes, and all 950 students met with success. This project could be used with any literary work or historic event to transform abstract concepts into vivid concrete renditions.

Facilities/Materials
Poster board or paper for panel scenes, markers, text of Beowulf, epic, info/sample of Bayeux Tapestry.

Outside Resources
CD Rom/Internet for research, art history information on tapestry.

Grades 6-12
Language Arts, Social Studies, Art History

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The Classroom Meeting:
A Classroom Strategy Promoting Problem Solving, Deliberation, and Anti-Violence

Grades 1-6
Morality, responsibility, and interpersonal communication skills

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The Idea and Its Value
Given the importance of a positive learning environment to effective learning, questions of classroom order demand our fullest attention. How can an educator take on the important role of “building better relationships”? The Classroom Meeting provides an ongoing mechanism that enables students to mediate their own conflicts at a predesignated point of time, thereby maximizing productive class time by deferring the daily distractions. It also provides students with an appropriate time and structured environment to settle differences. The program is comprised of three basic elements: 1) deferral, 2) mediation, and (3) reasonable consequences.

It is the goal of this project that students learn to solve their problems and differences independently. In cases where this is not possible for some reason, they may utilize the Classroom Meeting. A clipboard hangs with paper at “kid level” somewhere accessible in the classroom. Shortly after the conflict, a student may get up after completing an assignment, or at a free time such as recess, and write the grievance on the clipboard, along with the name and date. They are still encouraged to resolve their disputes independently, but are now scheduled for the next meeting. The class holds Classroom Meetings every Friday afternoon, and follows a modified “Roberts’ Rules of Order” format. The process of the meeting is as follows:
1. Students are seated quietly in the circle (to foster communication and a sense of unity).
2. The teacher calls the meeting officially to order.
3. The first agenda topic is announced by the teacher.
4. The “offended” has the key (symbolizing he she has the floor) and tells the class what happened in their own words. (Often by Friday, the accused has already mediated the problem, if that is the case then we go on to the next agenda topic).
5. The teacher picks one other person who saw or heard the incident occur, and she gets the key and tells the class what happened in their own words.
6. If further clarification is required, the teacher may pick a second person who saw or heard the incident and she gets the key and tells the class what happened.
7. The accused is then given the key and is expected to tell what happened in their own words.*
8. Following their account, the accused is asked how she would solve this problem from happening again.
9. The accused may either make a constructive suggestion towards solving the problem, or “pass”.
10. The accused then has the power to pass the key to the person to the right or left of him.
11. The key is passed on from one person to the next. The person with the key may make a suggestion (only one!) towards solving the problem.
12. After the key goes “full circle” the teacher reads off the suggested solutions.
13. Students then vote on their favorite solution.
14. The popular vote wins and is made into “law” from that day onward.

The accused is never forwarded accused of the crime, or belittled in any way. The accused is simply asked to solve the “hypothetical” problem.

As students engage in the Classroom Meeting process over time, they learn not only the importance of good behavior, but also the social consequences of inappropriate actions. By practicing listening skills, students are more likely to utilize these skills to remedy their own disputes (thereby foregoing the process in the future).

Students
Over 200 students have participated over the last 5 years.

Facilities/Materials
Clipboard and “key.”
The National Parks Project
An Integrated, Interdisciplinary Celebration of America’s National Parks

The Idea and Its Value

The awesome beauty of the giant redwoods of Sequoia National Park, the tropical richness of Haleakula National Park, the tragic history of Bantam’s National Park, the mysteries of Mesa Verde National Park, America’s National Parks capture our imagination, fill us with serenity and provide a unique tool for teaching Science, Social Studies and Language Arts.

We begin our semester long unit with a series of videos featuring many of the National Parks. We focus on the lesser known parks, such as Voyagers, as well as the better known parks, such as the Grand Canyon. Students then form themselves into groups of up to 5 students to choose a park they wish to research. Each student learns to write a business letter requesting information about their park. Their excitement is palpable as they bring in their maps, brochures and newsletters.

A trip to the public library is next as they learn about a variety of reference materials, including magazines, books, encyclopedias (both book and computer versions) and the internet. They are also encouraged to find a primary reference source. Some of the best projects have been created by students who have visited the park or done phone interviews with park rangers. They then learn the proper format for writing a bibliography.

The focus of the research in Social Studies includes: geography, the Native Americans who originally inhabited the area, early explorers, use of the area prior to it becoming a park, significant events in the park’s history and how it came to be a National Park. Current events are also emphasized with research into political and social issues effecting the park.

The focus of the research in science is: geology, ecosystems and biomes, plant and animal life, human impact and threats to the park, including such problems as endangered species, alien species, pollution, etc.

The project culminates with each group presenting a 7-15 minute performance to teach the rest of the class about their park. A rehearsal day is provided that serves the purpose of a rough draft. Other students provide the feedback on what is needed to present an informative, entertaining and creative program. Videotaped productions, plays, and large picture books have been among the favorite ways students have used to present their newly gained knowledge.

The students are enthusiastic about the project. Many of them have been able to convince their parents to take family vacations to their parks. The knowledge and skills they have gained will serve them well throughout their lives.

Grades 8-12
Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, Technology, Career Awareness, Performing Arts

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The World on the Day I Was Born

Grades 7-8
History, Journalism
Language Arts

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The Idea and Its Value
The best writing a teacher can elicit from a student is predicated on the idea that the student is interested in the topic. To the middle school student, there is no topic more compelling than him or herself. That's why this unit produces such fun results: the topic is what was going on in the world on the very day the student was born.

Students begin with a little preliminary research which itself is a worthwhile activity. They are charged to go to their local library and learn how to locate and duplicate the microfiche copy of the newspaper for the day they were born. For many students, it's the first time they realize this resource at their doorstep.

Armed with their own personal newspapers, students come to school buzzing. Allow some time for them to share their headlines; classroom discussions can really enhance social studies lessons as they realize some of the historical events that happened in their "ancient" past.

Next, students choose a specific story from their news day that interests them. They research the topic including at least one interview with someone who was alive and remembers the incident. For most kids, of course, this is a parent or guardian, but many GATE kids take it several steps beyond. This year, several students were born around the Challenger catastrophe and one student contacted NASA to ask if the accident was avoidable. I gave students a week to ten days to conduct research then I teach a writing workshop that models how to integrate oral history (their interview) with history (their research). Finally, the fact that this event occurred on such an auspicious occasion gives them a natural beginning and conclusion.

As a guideline, you might give them a specific "scaffolding" for their story:

Introduce your essays with a direct quote from your interview:
"On the day you were born, the only thing I remember happening was YOU," said my mom. When I went to the library, though, I found out that I wasn't the only story in town.

The body of the essay should include the 5Ws (who, what, when, where, why) and H (how) about the incident which the student should have from research. Quotes from expert witnesses can be integrated into the body as well. Students should have fun writing this piece of oral history in away that doesn't sound like an encyclopedia.

The interview also provides students a natural conclusion:
"What do you think will happen 12 years from now?" I asked Mom. All she said was, "Twelve years from now dinner should be ready!"

State Frameworks
This assignment integrates state requirements for research, analytical thinking, oral history/intererviewing and writing skills.

Students
I have done variations of this assignment for two years at the seventh grade level with approximately 60 students. Extension activities: Social Studies: Build a historical timeline that parallels a personal timeline you've done in previous years. For example, when you were learning to ride a bike, what was happening in the world?
We're in Charge of Celebrations!

The Idea and Its Value

This unit sets the tone for the entire school year, motivating and empowering the students with the knowledge that all learning is a celebration! The first day of school I begin by reading the students I'm in Charge of Celebrations by Byrd Baylor. It is about an Indian girl who declares she is not lonely in the desert because, as she states, “I'm in charge of celebrations.” These celebrations are simple life observations she makes that she wants to remember for the rest of her life. After I read the book I pulled out of my “celebration bag” symbols of what I celebrate in my life. The students’ project for the week was to find symbols of what they celebrate in their lives to bring in to share with the class. The next day I read the book with groups of children dramatizing various parts. On the third day the students worked in groups to create a poster of one of the celebrations from the book. The following day the students returned with their own celebration bags to share with the class. One child pulled a small American flag from her bag and explained, “My daddy gave me this flag because he couldn’t be with us on the 4th of July. My mamma and my brother and I climbed out of my window to the roof, and I held onto the flag while we watched the fireworks from our roof.” The students each chose one item from their celebration bags as the subject for a paragraph. Their bags, paragraphs, and posters were displayed for Back-to-School Night.

While any one of the celebrations described could be used depending on the student and grade level, I chose to focus on “Coyote Day.” I suggested to the students we would celebrate this day in our classroom and they readily agreed. They also eagerly embraced the idea of the musical, Coyote Steals Summer, which is based on an Indian legend. Two afternoons were spent with the students designing and making their costumes, and 9 days after school was set aside for making the sets, again with parent involvement. Three performances of the musical were given, with two of the performances being done as “dinner theater” for the primary grades’ Thanksgiving Feasts.

Also after “Coyote Day” the students began their own scientific research on a California wild animal, and did a written report. We then held another celebration, called “Wild Animal Day,” in which the students presented their “wild animal” for the class in a manner of their choosing. Some made posters, mobiles, and dioramas; others produced their own videos, made board games, or gave a memorized speech before the class. The students also developed word problems for the class to solve based on the research of their animal.

The students made megaphones and cheered for each other after each performance. They were eager to present in front of the class so they could hear the cheers from their classmates!

State Frameworks

We’re in Charge of Celebrations supports the California Frameworks emphasizing learning across the curriculum using a variety of teaching approaches. The goal of the unit is to help students personalize their learning in a highly motivational setting.

Students

The class consisted of 33 fourth graders including Title I (yellow-grade level), G.A.T.E., ESL, Resource students.

Facilities/Materials

This unit uses basic classroom materials. A multipurpose room is helpful but optional.

Outside Resources

Principles taken from the course, “Art Across the Curriculum” taught by Patti Post, as well as a Wright Group Literature seminar were helpful. Bad Wolf Press was the publisher of the musical.
White Gold:
Twist and Pull Cotton Through the Curriculum

Grades 4-8
Science, Health, Math, Social Studies Language Arts Visual & Performing Arts

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The Idea and Its Value
Cotton is the "common thread" woven through this innovative and versatile unit which stretches from the cotton fields of the Great Valley of California to "dem' cotton fields back home..." in the deep South. Because of cotton's importance as a historical fiber, indeed the world's most valuable fiber, numerous grade levels can "twist and pull" concepts of White Gold into curricular areas of literature, science, art, history/social science, geography, and math.

Easily incorporated into California agriculture for 4th grade, the Colonial period for 9th and 8th, and world histories for 6th and 7th, this unit can be spun throughout the year or can be used as a shorter unit activating higher level thinking skills. Introduce the unit by having each student twist and pull cotton fiber into a thread for an anticipatory set. Read Working Cotton or excerpt from Blue Willow to pull students into the unit.

Show cotton belt on map. Make historical connections between past and present by investigating cotton's origins from 3,000 B.C. in India and Egypt, to the Industrial Revolution in England, to the American Colonies and Native Americans. Explore myths associated with this 'vegetable lamb' or 'zoo-phete.' Students create "clever cotton critters" and "spin a tale."

Show video Cotton's Journey from Seed to You to provide further understanding of processing. Let students touch cotton with seed inside, ball, carded, burl, sliver, roving, and look at cottonseed oil. Assign a scavenger hunt. Students will find products at home to bring in for classroom collage - "Cotton, Cotton What Have You Gotten?" Students create wordsearches or clever cotton crossword puzzles using a "Letter of Cotton" vocabulary words.

Geometry, fractions, and art are strands that can be braided together by constructing a thematic quilt using paper or 100% cotton fabric. Students can tie-dye a cotton T-shirt or learn to weave on a loom, and observe web and warp by examining cloth under a mini-microscope. Life lab further engages fertile minds as student farmers cultivate cotton crops in our school garden. Music can be interwoven too: Old Negro Spirituals and folk songs can be taught. "Pick a Bale of Cotton," "Dem' Ole Cotton Fields Back Home" and "The Ball Weel Song" lend themselves to positive classroom participation. Student letters to California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association may be composed to acquire more information, posters, and handouts. Children research and compile a list of cotton products. They may present their research in reports or posters that show how every part of the cotton plant is used. These culminating activities should both demonstrate knowledge and generate a growth in appreciation of cotton as "the fabric of our lives."

State Frameworks
This unit supports the History/Social Science and the Language Arts Frameworks integrating reading, writing, and listening with math, science, art and music. It uses active learning principles; is equally accessible to all learners; and provides "real life applications," all of which support state recommendations.

Students
This seedling unit was cultivated and pruned for the first time this year with 60 fourth grade students including RSP and GATE. Teachers from 4th through 8th grade can easily adapt this unit to their needs. Because of the hands-on nature and real life connections, this unit will benefit all students.

Facilities/Materials
Cotton's Journey From Seed to You: A field trip in a box—kit from the Alaka Company, P.O. Box 55, Tranquility, CA 93668
Life Lab garden plot and tools, construction paper and quilt patterns

Outside Resources
California Agriculture in the Classroom Conference 1998, The Plant Doctor (AgX).
Windows on Education

The Idea and Its Value

This spring my art students ventured out of our classroom and into the hallways of our school to share their colorful designs with the rest of our campus. For two weeks we painted on the classroom windows, brightening up the campus and letting everyone know a lot about what goes on inside all those rooms.

Everyone of our students possesses that natural glow of creativity, and how fine it is for them to be able to share these talents with their "community." This spring, with approval from our administration, I sent letters of explanation to all our staff, inviting them to have their windows painted with designs that would be inspired and approved by them. By this time the students had already done work in design and painting, and could apply this knowledge to the new project. The positive responses flooded back from teachers, many with requests for individual students to paint their windows. What a buzz of excitement there was as we divided up the windows, selected our groups, and began to plan the designs.

Each picture had to be pre-approved by both the classroom teacher and me. The picture had to represent the teacher and the subject being taught. The students had tried to involve their teacher as a client relationship so that they could come up with a design that was special and specific for that teacher. The image had to be meaningful and positive. The students had to think critically and creatively in order to come up with designs that would be appropriate for that particular teacher.

The two weeks of painting was an exciting time. We used tempera paint applied with sponge brushes to the windows. Each group worked independently, but had to know all the rules of correct behavior and clean up, and also worked to their highest ability, knowing that their picture was on display. This visibility gave a high degree of accountability to the project and led each student to the best quality effort. The relationships within the groups were wonderful. Each group had to bond as a team, work effectively as team members, develop leadership skills, and be accountable to their assigned teacher. Each had to be ethically responsible and think above personal ideas, putting themselves in the teachers position to know what images would best work for their room, subject and instructor.

The results were exciting. When we were all finished we took a walk around the campus, discussing the windows and critiquing each piece. After discussing each piece, the students turned in a written critique, evaluating the success of each window. The staff was pleased and everyone was happy to keep the paintings up until the end of the school year. Now and then we walk through the halls and have a sense of the positive learning that is taking place inside each room. On the chemistry windows a scientific Rick Gafford's potato plants, marine biology sports a giant whale, Pythagoras ponders his theorem on a math window, while Don Quixote gallops across a Spanish room. Learning is also taking place as students outside of art enjoyed overhearing the Spanish students discussing "girl in the mirror," each student has the ongoing responsibility for maintaining the window, cleaning up any scratches or graffiti, but it has been a pleasant surprise to see how much respect the school has shown to the work of their fellow students.

The project encompassed the entire school, but could be done on any scale. The windows of an individual classroom could be painted depicting subject or area of study, and easily washed off with sponges and water. The project integrates global and community perspectives with course work, is a real-world application of our studies, and is truly a life-long learning experience.

State Frameworks

Covers all four components of the state framework to develop and expand aesthetic perception in students to increase aesthetic awareness, perceiving the world in terms of visual and tactile images and symbols which are unique to the visual arts; creative expression-artist's knowledge and skills; visual arts heritage; aesthetic valuing-analysis, interpretation and judgment.

Students

Approximately 60 students participated in 98-99. They varied from 9th-12th grade. However, this is a project that can be done on any scale. One class could be involved, or many. It can also be directed to students at the middle school, and in other subject areas, for example history or English, foreign language or health.

Facilities/Materials

Materials needed: tempera paint (mixed with a bit of Ivory soap helps adhesion), assorted sizes of foam brushes, water, sponges, art history books. The cost is low, but the visible impact is high.

Outside Resources

Outside resources can always enhance a project. Perhaps there is a professional holiday window painter or an artist who paints murals in public places who could speak to the class and give tips on technique.
The Idea and Its Value

Students awoke to the destructive and wasteful nature of our disposable society, and decide to make a change starting with their own school campus. Growing political and economic concerns about limited landfill space and the need to maintain nutrient rich soil for agriculture prompted students to help us create this unit. We started with the basic premise that nutrients and minerals are taken from the soil to create the things we consume as a society. Therefore, much of what we consider trash could be used to revitalize soil quality. Through this project, students took a leadership role in establishing a school-wide process for converting cafeteria waste into vermicompost to replenish the depleted soil in our school garden. They reduced the overall trash output of our school and became active in raising community awareness.

Students were introduced to the concept of limited resources by exploring current trash management practices, analyzing the volume of trash output in their own homes, and researching ways to convert trash into usable materials. They became experts in worm biology, composting, and recycling practices. Experiments with variables affecting rates of decomposition, and optimum conditions for vermicomposting were conducted. The effect soil quality had on crop production in our school garden was also tested. Students compared cafeteria scraps and garden waste input, with composting and worm casting yields. They recorded data, analyzed the results, and assessed productivity levels. Using this information, they determined how many worm bins would be needed to handle our cafeteria waste. They also designed a process for separating plastics, metals and glass from organic waste in student lunches. Students then created lesson plans and educated their peers on this separation process, as well as worm biology and the importance of recycling. They have also presented similar workshops to other schools in the district.

Instructional Objectives:

Communication skills are fostered as students develop descriptive, expository, and persuasive pieces. Scientific processes and Environmental Science concepts are acquired as students conduct various experiments. Higher level thinking skills are applied as students evaluate information and develop a waste management program. Students develop mathematical skills as they record and evaluate data, analyze trash volume, calculate yields, and construct worm bins. Language Arts skills are developed as students research various topics, write reports, and design lesson plans and scripts. Social Action skills are fostered as students become active participants in reducing trash output on campus and conduct workshops.

State Frameworks

This unit has been carefully designed to move students toward mastery of State and District Standards in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. It provides opportunities for both formal and informal communication. Students are required to comprehend and synthesize in-depth information from a diverse collection of texts and materials. They develop fluency with basic computational skills, and become mathematical problem solvers finding ways to reach solutions or goals where routine paths are not apparent. Scientific processes are applied to the learning of concepts, such as cycles, decomposition, and limited resources, as laid out in the Biological and Earth Science sections of the California State Science Framework.

Students

Three classes of 6th graders led 56 classes of K-6 students through this project. The students included Resource, Title I, ELD and GATE. All 630 students were trained in the Cafeteria Waste Separation Program. Mathematics in the unit can be simplified or expanded. Simple counting and graphing can be done by primary students. Basic standards of measurement and fractions can be included in the middle elementary grades. While ratios, proportions, and percentages are applicable to upper grade students. Language Arts skills can range from simple narratives and observations, to delivering workshops and writing research pieces. This can be an in-class or a school-wide project.

Facilities/Materials

All you need is one pound of red worms, a plastic bin, and some shredded paper, containers of various sizes, a scale, trash cans, heavy duty gloves, folders for record keeping, paper, and art supplies. Science lab materials may include magnifying lenses, spray bottles, flashlights, and microscopes.

Outside Resources

Some valuable resources are: Bottle Biology by Mall Ingram, Science Activities for Children by Cusinier, and Worms Eat My Garbage by Mary Appelhof for a bit of humor, read There's a Hair in My Dirt by Gary Larson. Jon Witterich of Southland Farms offers a wealth of technical support, expertise, and encouragement. You may also find support from your city Resource Management Office. The Big Green Worm Farm has a ready supply of red worms and instructional materials available for purchase.
AREA Energy LLC
American Petroleum Institute
AT&T Wireless Services
Avenue TV Cable Service
Bird Roofing & Waterproofing, Inc.
Boething Treeland Farms
Camarillo Community Bank
England, Whitfield, Schroeder & Treadway, LLP
Exxon
Fast Frame (Ventura and Thousand Oaks)
Furniture King
Grether Farming
GTE
Hansen Trust
JIMS Machining
L.A. Workout, Camarillo
Limoneira Company
Marshall's Design
Pacific Bell
PaeFab
Procter & Gamble
PSI Bearings, Inc.
Rockwell
Roll's Scaffold & Equipment, Inc.
Rotary Club of Simi Sunrise
Santa Barbara Bank & Trust
Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce
Southern California Edison
VCEDA (Ventura Co. Economic Development Assoc.)
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